

Talk Yourself Into a Win

A practical self-talk toolkit for training and competition — backed by sport psychology research.

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What you say to yourself changes how you perform. Research shows athletes who use deliberate self-talk improve strength, endurance, and technique — and recover with less perceived pain. The catch: generic phrases don't work as well as ones that are **yours**. Use this page to find words that land, then build your own on the worksheet (back page).

1 Two Types of Self-Talk *use both — they do different jobs*

Motivational Self-Talk

Fuels drive and effort. Best when energy dips or the task is hard.

"I'm built for this."

LOW ENERGY / FATIGUE

"Trust the training."

PRE-COMPETITION NERVES

"One more rep."

STRENGTH / POWER EFFORTS

"I'm crushing this."

MID-RACE CONFIDENCE DIP

Instructional Self-Talk

Sharpens technique. Best for skill execution and error correction.

"Light feet."

AGILITY / QUICK TRANSITIONS

"Drive through the heels."

LIFTING / JUMPING

"Chest up."

POSTURE UNDER FATIGUE

"Hips drive."

SPRINT / THROWING MECHANICS

2 Match the Moment *pick the phrase for where you are in the effort*

WARM-UP / BEFORE IT STARTS

"I've put in the work. I'm ready."

EARLY — SETTLING IN

"Settle in. Find the rhythm."

MID-WAY — IT GETS HARD

"Hold form. Stay tall."

FINAL PUSH

"This is where I'm built different."

3 Interrupt & Redirect *when a negative thought shows up*

Same pattern, every time — interrupt the thought, then return to your cue word.

Negative thought



Trigger (tap thigh / snap)



Say "next" / "reset"



Back to cue word

Build Your Own Self-Talk Plan

Fill this in with your own words. Generic phrases don't stick — yours will.

WORKSHEET

1 Audit your inner voice

During your next practice, just notice what you're already saying — don't change it yet. Write down 2 recurring phrases (good or bad).

2 Your cue words

3 instructional cues (technique) + 3 motivational cues (energy). Make them yours.

INSTRUCTIONAL

MOTIVATIONAL

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3 Your pre-competition script

3 short sentences to read before warm-up: one about your preparation, one focusing cue, one motivational line.

Preparation: _____

Focus cue: _____

Motivation: _____

4 Your stop-and-redirect plan

Choose your physical trigger and your reset word — use them whenever a negative thought shows up.

My trigger: _____ My reset word: _____

5 Your self-talk windows

For endurance or multi-event days — assign one phrase to each section so there's no decision fatigue mid-event.

FIRST HALF

MIDDLE

FINAL PUSH

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6 Post-competition debrief

Neutral, not a verdict. No "I was terrible" or forced "I was amazing."

What I did well

One thing to adjust

I showed up and competed